Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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The War on Terror Hits a Bump in Lodi

By Alexander Cockburn

A terrorism trial of two Muslims in federal court in Sacramento has thus far left the FBI looking culpably manipulative, extremely credulous, and prodigiously extravagant. At the center of the case are two Pakistanis living in Lodi, a small town south of Sacramento. One, 23-year-old Hamid Hayat, a cherry picker, stands accused of being a terrorist who trained at an Al Qaeda camp and returned to the U.S.A. to wreak havoc. The other, his 48-year-old father, Umer Hayat, is charged with lying to the FBI about his son's activities. If found guilty, the son faces 39 years in prison, the father 16. The case is being followed with apprehension by all Muslims here.

Their ordeal began last summer, when Hamid Hayat, fresh back from a two-year trip to Pakistan where he has spent half his life, was called in by the FBI and interrogated three times.

The California-born Hamid is evidently a simple fellow. At his first interview in the FBI he betrayed no alarm at the prospect of interrogation by men who believed they were on the verge of breaking a major terror ring in Lodi. He complimented one of the agents on the style of his shoes and in general made every effort to be helpful. So did his father, Umer whose job is driving an ice-cream truck. The FBI also grilled them intensively last June.

When the indictments came down, the news headlines were that Hamid had attended a terror-training camp in Pakistan, that there was a terror ring centered on Lodi. Both father and son had made full confessions.

What's actually emerging in the trial, where both men are fortunate to

Message From a Vet of My Lai Time

"Our Descent into Hell has Begun"

By Tony Swindell

Editors' note: A few weeks ago we got a friendly letter from Tony Swindell, a newspaper editor in Sherman, Texas. "Begin paying attention," Swindell urged, ''to stories from Iraq like the very recent one about U.S. Marines killing a group of civilians near Baghdad. This is the next step in the Iraq war as frustration among our soldiers grows — especially with multiple tours.

"I served with the 11th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, and My Lai was not an isolated incident. We came to be known as the Butcher's Brigade, and we also were the birthplace of the Phoenix Program. The brigade commander and a battalion commander were charged with murdering civilians (shooting them from helicopters, recorded in some of my photos), although both skated. If you recall from his autobiography, Colin Powell served briefly with the 11th in Duc Pho before going to division HQ in Chu Lai.

"The atrocities against Iraqi civilians are slipping under the media radar screen, but they're going to explode in America's face not too long from now and dwarf the Abu Ghraib (sic) incident. That was a fraternity beer bust by comparison. The Ft. Sill episode [described in JoAnn Wypijewski's piece in our last issue] is another one of the same storm clouds on the horizon. I sincerely fear for our country."

We asked Swindell to expand these thoughts. Here's his powerful response.

In Iraq, our descent into hell, our "Apocalypse Now" moment, has begun. First there was Gitmo, then the global rendition program, then Abu Ghraib, then the pulverizing of Fallujah, and now trigger-happy raids that are filling multitudes of sandy graves with men, women and children. Has "Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out" become the mission in Babylon? Can't anyone remember Vietnam, where we left behind more than a million dead civilians? In Iraq, we've way past the half-million mark, probably the million mark, if you count the 1990s sanctions. Are the American people as blind and deaf as they seem? Don't we see ourselves walking through the gates of hell and can't we hear the doors clanging shut on our country?

Who am I to say all this, you might ask. Fair enough, I reply. So let me tell you a story about monstrous crimes and tragedies from my generation about to be repeated in Iraq in front of the whole world. First, understand that a single soldier can't be expected to grasp the total criminality of war because his whole universe is a tiny place right in front of his nose. So he can stay alive. If he knew everything that was going on, he would be heartbroken, and if he also knew why, he would go insane.

The narrowness of his vision is exactly how even the best and most humane soldier unwillingly becomes a monster, and the people who create war know this. Out of grief and rage, with the stench of his buddy's shredded flesh in his nostrils, the soldier stops asking questions and then begins making up his own rules with a rifle. He has touched the heart of darkness and there's no going back… ever. Embracing the whore called war destroys morality, and doing

(**Descent into Hell** *continued on page*

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have good lawyers, is the usual saga of FBI chicanery. It's become very clear from videotapes of the FBI's questioning that the men have very poor English. Their native tongue is Pashto. They understood little of what they were being asked and were mostly concerned with pleasing their interrogators. In the words of one courtroom reporter from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "they gave many answers that had been previously suggested by the agents – who did most of the talking."

The son, in his five-hour videotaped confession, described a camp located on a mountaintop outside Balakot in the Northwest Frontier province, where he said 35 to 200 Pakistani men fired guns and exercised. The young man gave five different answers when asked who ran the camp. He mentioned "big people ... taller than me, (more) educated than me"; a Pakistani group named Harakat-ul-Ansar that was first brought up by an FBI agent; al Qaeda); "maybe my uncle"; and "maybe my grandfather".

The father, who said he visited the camp later, in 2004, out of curiosity, said it was outside Rawalpindi in Punjab province.

The father delighted the agents at one point by identifying three other young men in Lodi as possible terrorists. The son named two different men – his cousins – as attending Pakistani camps.

According to the *Chronicle* reporter, "Other admissions didn't seem to make sense. He said he recognized that men had gone to the camp from around the world, and that some had come from his father-in-law's madrasa in Pakistan, even though they wore masks. 'I can recognize from the eyes, you know,' he said."

In contrast to his son's location of the camp on top of a mountain, the father said the one he visited was underground.

At this camp, said Hayat Sr, more than 1,000 men from around the world – including white Americans – fired high-powered rifles, swung curved swords, and learned to pole vault across bodies of water. "They got those stick, the long stick," Hayat said on the videotape. "You know ... when you want to jump something, they was trying to stick like here and jump maybe 16 feet over there."

"They used it like a vaulting pole," FBI Agent Timothy Harrison put in.

"Yes sir," Hayat said.

"There must have been very tall ceilings," Harrison said. "This is a very deep basement?"

"Very deep basement, yes," Hayat said. "Very, very deep basement, yes."

The reason that FBI had pulled in the Hayats was that the Bureau had established a tight professional relationship in Oregon with a sharp fellow of 32 called Naseem Khan. In Lodi he was a fast food worker, then traveled north a few hundred miles on the invitation of an Oregon woman who was impressed by him. He cooked for her family on weekends, and had a job in a fast food joint in Bend, central Oregon.

To his Oregon residence, in 2001, not long after the attacks of September 11, came FBI agents investigating a different case in which there was a suspect with the same name as Khan. The agents established to their satisfaction that this Khan wasn't the man they wanted. Fortune favors those who seize opportunity. Khan pointed to an image of Osama bin Laden's number 2, Ayman al-Zawahiri, that had come up on a newsclip on his TV and said he'd seen him in Lodi in 1999.

The FBI pounced on this disclosure, and soon Khan was on the Bureau's payroll at $50,000 a year as an undercover informer, charged with returning to Lodi and probing the terror ring. To date the Bureau has paid him $250,000.

In fact, it was a piece of great good luck that the defense lawyers were able to get Khan's claims to the Bureau into the court record. It came about because he was a crucial witness against the Hayats. In testimony he mentioned his claim of al-Zawahiri's presence in Lodi, and the prosecution then had to give the defense a redacted version of their file.

According to Khan, the quiet town of Lodi was a rendezvous for several of the most wanted men on the planet. He'd seen Ayman al-Zawahiri in Lodi in 1999. "Every time I would go to the mosque [al-Zawahiri] would be coming or going," Khan claimed. The vigilant Khan had also noted the regular presence at the mosque of Abdelkarim Hussein Mohamed al-Nasser, a suspect in the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers military housing complex in Saudi Arabia. And, to top it off, he said he had seen Ahmed Mohammed Hamed Ali, a suspect in the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, in nearby Stockton in 1999.

According to the *Chronicle*, public disclosure of Khan's "observations" created quite a stir in Lodi. "The whole community is dumbfounded as to what's going on with this," said Nasim Khan, who was the Lodi mosque's leader from 1998 to 2000 and is no relation to the government's informant. "Everything that is coming out, there's no basis into it."

The locals told reporters that all three of the terror suspects, from Arab countries, would have stood out in the tight-knit Muslim community, which includes many Pakistanis and South Asians. The most prominent of the three, al-Zawahiri, is an Egyptian. "A majority of the congregation at the mosque is Pakistani," said Shoaib, the mosque leader. "There's only a half-dozen or so of Arab descent. If he came in on a regular basis, people would remember him. It's a ridiculous claim." One of the Pak-India spice store's cashiers summed up the feeling that many have aboutNaseem Khan. "If the FBI gave me half the money they gave him, I'd tell them all kinds of crazy stories, too," said Mumtaz Khan, 58.

For the prosecution, the problem regarding Khan's overall credibility that the three terrorists identified by Khan as having been in Lodi on specific dates, were – according to U.S. government officials – not in the U.S.A. at those

(**Lodi** *continued on page 6*)

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(**Hell** *continued from page 1*)
all this in a dishonorable cause compounds the damage.

That's why we who have been there must speak out forcefully. If it requires a stiff punch in the mouth to jump-start some addled neocon brains, so be it. And for anyone who gets their political truth from self-inflating whoopee cushions like Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly, it will come none too soon. To remain silent this time risks the loss of everything that our country stands for.

The story I want to tell you begins on a miserably hot day in February, 1969, as I watched U.S. Army Col. John W. Donaldson put a cup of rice wine mixed with blood to his lips and drink deeply. No matter that the concoction was alive with heartworms, Donaldson never flinched. At the time, I was serving as an army combat correspondent attached to the 11th Light Infantry Brigade and my job that day was to follow Donaldson around, snapping picture after picture of the macabre festivities unfolding in front of my eyes. He was the brigade commander at a bloody punching bag called LZ Bronco next to the village of Duc Pho. The brigade base camp was part of the Americal Division, headquartered to the north in Chu Lai.

The colonel and a large contingent of other brigade and division officers were guests of honor at a Tet festival in the Montagnard village of Ba To in the central highlands southwest of Chu Lai. Nearby was a Special Forces A Team camp, an ominous triangular fortress bristling with 105 mm cannon at each corner firing flechette rounds. A snake couldn't have crawled through the maze of sharp barbed and razor tape wire surrounding the compound, and dozens of claymore mines were set in the walls. A claymore at close range will instantly render you into your constituent molecules.

The Montagnard village and A Team camp had been hit hard by concentrated North Vietnamese forces earlier in the week, and Donaldson's presence was in part a thumb in the eye to enemy commanders licking their wounds in nearby triple canopy jungle. The landscape gave me chills, because the beautiful, green-dappled hills all around the village were pockmarked with hundreds of fresh artillery and bomb craters exposing the bright red soil. I couldn't get the image of the Jolly Green Giant with a bad case of acne out of my mind. While topless Montagnard women spruced up the area with totems and bright banners to cover attack damage, a sacrificial water buffalo calf was slowly being prodded to death with a spear by the local village chief. It took about half an hour before the calf sagged to its knees in exhaustion, at that point too weak to even cry out. The chief then cut the calf's throat above a large earthen jug to catch the pulsing blood while another villager poured rice wine and stirred.

Unknown to the visitors, the Montagnards had earlier tortured to death three North Vietnamese captives and partook of their blood in the company of Special Forces A Team troopers. These unfortunate had been impaled through their anuses with bamboo poles and given the same spear prodding. Later, their bodies were staked out along enemy infiltration trails as a mortal warning to the enemy.

Out of grief and rage, with the stench of his buddy's shredded flesh in his nostrils, the soldier stops asking questions and then begins making up his own rules with a rifle. He has touched the heart of darkness and there's no going back … ever.

This day became my own personal "Apocalypse Now" moment, a full decade before the Francis Ford Coppola's movie was released. Not long before, we became personally aware that soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, had rampaged in My Lai when military police ransacked our hooch looking for evidence and then hauled Rusty Calley off in handcuffs. Meanwhile, Tiger Teams were creating ruthless, bloody havoc across the Batangan Peninsula against suspected enemy cadre. Brutality against civilians was standard operating procedure. Because of the Pacification Program mass relocations, entire swathes of the countryside began to resemble the Missouri Burnt District during the Civil War.

The Phoenix Program was in full swing, and it was the horror to end all horrors. I had earlier tagged along on a Phoenix mission directed by the ARVN National Police, and will spare you the details. Trust me, you do not want to know what was being done. Standing there and watching Donaldson drink from the cup, the profound symbolism of all that was wrong in this place hit me like a blow in the face. Ironically, an anti-war rag called the *Overseas Weekly* or *Overseas* latched onto one of my pictures and captioned it, "Army Brass Drinks Blood In Pagan Ceremonies".

By February 1969, morale in the brigade had hit rock bottom because of horrific casualties caused primarily from booby traps, and an entire battalion had been stood down as non-functional. The North Vietnamese were endlessly blasting our firebases with 122 mm rocket artillery, and LZ Bronco was soon to be hit more than 200 times during a famous assault that came to be called "Duc Pho Burning". Mutinies, insubordination and fragging of officers became commonplace. Soldiers cracked and a few committed suicide. One grunt over the edge opened fire into the POW compound, killing a number of captured enemy. Col. Donaldson and a battalion commander, two of the highest-ranking officers in the brigade, were charged with murdering civilians from helicopters while the My Lai investigation was still underway. A young Major Colin Powell assigned to the 11th Brigade – who was well acquainted with Donaldson – wrote in his autobiography about being stunned by what he saw going on in the 11th. Perhaps, he had experienced his own "Apocalypse Now" moment.

There's a numbness in my guts as I see the same nightmares becoming reality again in Iraq, and I wonder what's happened to America's soul. Is this what we want, another generation suckled on the poison of another renegade leadership? Gooks have become ragheads, every adult male is an insurgent eligible for torture, and every Iraqi home filled

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with men, women and children is a free-fire zone. Even places of worship get flattened. Once again, we've been marched into another lunatic asylum in the Twilight Zone.

How did it happen? Why did we sit on our hands and let our leaders initiate an unprovoked proxy war? A mushroom cloud over Cleveland delivered by a pipsqueak Iraq that couldn't even get an airplane in the air or a dilapidated tank outside its own borders without throwing a track? Gimme a break. How could the average John Doe let himself be deceived into believing that Saddam Hussein was really a threat?

With Iran now in the crosshairs, I pray that our national amnesia is wearing off. I know that from coast to coast a growing number of people – especially many combat veterans like myself – feel helpless, confused, frightened, and completely out of the loop. Three years into Iraq, why do we still keep hearing the same refrain, pre-emptive war into the next generation? On and on and on it goes, but unfortunately our emperors in Washington treat middle Americans asking hard questions like bill collectors at a funeral… or, publicly skewer them as extremists and traitors. And don't even think about asking about Israeli involvement in the disaster that Dubya calls a Middle Eastern policy.

I listen in vain to hear the voices of young Americans who will be directly and immediately affected. Current events in the Middle East should be a paramount issue, but, inexplicably, the kids are completely nonchalant. Raised on the Internet and X-Boxes, maybe Iraq is just another Hollywood-style media production to them.

But, I'm going to make a prediction. Our salvation will come when Selective Service notices begin arriving in mailboxes, and make no mistake, they are coming. I predict that young voices will soon become the loudest against empire as the hip-hoppers, the teeny boppers and the slackers rudely discover that involuntary combat means no video games or boom boxes, no marathon beer busts, and certainly no teenaged girls in thong bikinis.

We in the older generation can help things along. First, turn off the televisions and study a little American history, like the parts repeatedly warning us about foreign entanglements and passionate attachments. Really think about what kind of America we're handing to our children. Organize geezer squads to buttonhole politicians, and enlist a slacker cavalry to rain e-mail on every bureaucrat in sight. Let them all know we don't care about the new world order and its Manifest Corporate Destiny. Tell Washington that unprovoked, pre-emptive wars go against the grain of everything that's American, and we're no longer going to give it the Good Homicidal Seal of Approval.

While we're at it, let's make a sincere effort to tell elected representatives, loud and clear at every opportunity, that we want our government back from the political and corporate lobbies. Give the entire bureaucratic structure the message that we want the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth on anything that affects our lives… fast, before another bullet is fired or bomb dropped in anger. The U.S. State Department especially needs this message drummed into their heads until they all have tinnitus.

Gooks have become ragheads, every adult male is an insurgent eligible for torture, and every Iraqi home filled with men, women and children is a free-fire zone. Even places of worship get flattened. Once again, we've been marched into another lunatic asylum in the Twilight Zone.

Don't leave out the Billy Grahams, Jerry Falwells, and Pat Robertsons, (comma) and their legions of religious robots. Ask these Bible thumpers a simple question: brother, who would GEE-zus bomb, torture, rape and murder? While they choke on their own hypocrisy, direct them to the Book of John in the New Testament for a theology refresher. Christ wasn't called the Prince of Peace for nothing.

Constantly remind anyone who'll listen to you that the American Revolution blossomed with a ferocious commitment to keep a new continent free from two thousand years of empires, monarchies, feudal dictatorships, and armed religious institutions held in power by brute force and the doctrine of might makes right. People like Washington, Jefferson and Franklin instead shouted no, RIGHT makes might. That timeless concept was an invincible weapon against King George's Redcoats and it is just as powerful against nuclear weapons and carrier battle groups.

Yes, it will take guts, but what's our alternative? Either we start living up to our own ideals or the world will very soon compel us to do it. If, that is, they even think we're worth saving.

FYI, my unit was given an entire chapter in the Time Life Vietnam War collection about combat photos and correspondents. In a nutshell, we went everywhere – with grunts, recon, Special Forces, combat engineers, artillery, wherever combat was anticipated. We pretty much served as the army's eyes, kept track of action and casualty info and passed it along, etc. As a result, we had a good handle on things. Our unit was almost totally made up of experienced combat soldiers who joined the unit after service in the bush. It takes a little sand to be able to concentrate on your camera while people are shooting at you with automatic weapons or high explosive rounds. I got shot down once on a combat assault against the North Vietnamese in the 1st Huey into a landing zone so I could take pictures of the grunts coming in. In all, I participated in more than 30 full-scale combat missions, and several more aboard Medevac flights. My buddies in the unit had equally harrowing experiences, with one taking an AK round through the lens of his camera. I think all of us each earned four battle stars in 11 months, which gave a 4-week early release from Vietnam. We all had nicknames, and mine was Torch. CP

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The US and Iran: a Peaceful Way Forward

By Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi

No one can say with confidence what the Iranian leaders have in mind. Do they have ambitions to enrich weapons grade uranium or are they simply looking for a long-term plan for their energy needs? No one should or could accept the Iranian leaders' assertions that they have no intention of developing a nuclear arsenal.

No one should or could believe the Bush administration's promises that it will pursues a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the current crisis, much of which is manufactured by the neo-conservative war machine.

When President Bush calls the idea of using bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapons "wild speculations", no body should believe him or any other White House denials that it is in the midst of activating its contingency war plans on Iran.

War is not inevitable, no matter how hard the both sides try to make it so. The following six-point proposal is based on an assumption that the most significant element compelling the Islamic Republic to contemplate militarizing their nuclear technology is their threat assessment.

Those in the Bush administration who believe that they could bomb Iran into submission, or deter their resolve to advance a nuclear technology, are simply racing away from a negotiated settlement of the current conflict.

Once compared to all other coercive and military measures, the six-point plan to resolve the crisis offers concrete benefits for both sides. The major costs of this solution (comparing to the possible hundreds of thousands of deaths, immense destruction of Iranian cities, and colossal economic price for both sides) are symbolic, for the most part, and require prevailing over issues of pride and prejudice.

1. Iran has an inalienable right to peaceful nuclear technology. This right comes with the responsibilities and obligations to the international community as stated in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Should Iran decide to expand and sustain a nuclear technology which includes full cycle enrichment program, the Islamic Republic must comply with the IAEA's terms of inspection and regulation. Iran should guarantee the complete transparency of its program.

2. The United States should sign a non-aggression pact with Iran that recognizes the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic and pledges non-interference in Iranian domestic affairs. The United States must categorically reject any project of regime change in Iran.

If the Bush administration is committed to the cause of democracy and human rights, it must recognize that its efforts to "buy" or "install" democracy in Iran, or any other country in the world, have the contrary effect of strengthening undemocratic forces. American threats justify the suppression of civil liberties at home and abroad.

The United States and its Europeans allies must recognize that even the most intrusive inspection regime cannot stop Iran from contemplating the militarization of its nuclear technology. The peril of such a development cannot be contained or eliminated by threats of war. Rather, these threats provide stronger and more justifiable reasons for speeding up the militarization of peaceful nuclear technology.

3. The Iranian government should accept and guarantee a policy of non-interference in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami has acknowledged, Iranian policy must be based on the recognition of the Palestinian peoples' right of self-determination. The Islamic Republic must guarantee that it will respect any agreement between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.

4. Iran should formally acknowledge that the seizure of the American Embassy in Iran was a violation of international laws protecting diplomatic missions. It should recognize that by seizing the embassy they violated the sovereignty of the United States.

Prior American involvement in Iran, especially the US role in installing and supporting the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah, could not and should not justify the act of holding American diplomats hostage. Iran should restore the embassy to its original condition and maintain the grounds for its future transfer to its American owners, or pay damages to the American government.

5. The United States should release all frozen Iranian assets, lift its trade embargo, and halt punitive measures against companies which invest in Iranian industry.

6. Both the US and the Islamic Republic should begin negotiations preliminary to re-establishing full diplomatic relations. This could be part of a joint US-Iranian effort to stabilize Afghanistan and Iraq.

I urge opinion makers in the US to press the government to turn away from fomenting war. This proposal could be the means to de-escalating the crisis. CP

Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi is a professor of history at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

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(**Lodi** *continued from page 2)*

times.

Back in 2001, riding high as an FBI undercover informant, Khan, equipped with a secret recorder, made friends with the Hayats and did what such FBI provocateurs always do: sought to push young Hayat into self-incriminating statements and actions while urging the shy young fellow to be a man and do battle for Islam.

Khan's credibility has taken some heavy punishment, but that aside, the government has failed to make an overpowering case, even with the videotaped confessions the defense say were extorted from the befuddled and uncomprehending Hayats. A juror who was excused by the judge because she'd failed to disclose a brief relationship to a sheriff's deputy in 1996 told reporters she was unpersuaded by the government's case.

"Beyond a reasonable doubt – that hasn't been proven, in my opinion," said

Andrea Clabaugh, a 39-year-old Carmichael resident who works as an accounting manager at a structural engineering firm in Sacramento.

"In my notes, I recall writing down something about the agents feeding him names. It didn't seem like Hamid actually volunteered anything. During those interrogations, it looked like he was being badgered. It felt to me that in some respects he was giving them information because they didn't believe him when he said he didn't know anything. He had to tell them something."

For Muslims in America it's a fraught case. Aside from the prosecution of the Hayats, the government went after two Pakistani imams in Lodi who agreed to be deported on immigration violations after the government tried to link them to extremists. Obviously, if the government had anything on the imams they would have held them and prosecuted. Muslims fear a conviction of the Hayats would unleash further prejudice and harassment.

The star of the courtroom battles so far is Hamid Hayat's lawyer, Wazhma Mojaddidi, an Afghani immigrant and practising Muslim, only three years out of law school. This is her first criminal trial and her first federal challenge, and all agree she has risen brilliantly to the challenge. She's stylish too. "The other day," the *Sacramento Bee* quotes a friend , " she wore amazing iridescent, taupe, pointy snakeskin shoes. She's worn a pink suit, chocolate and turquoise jackets, and a green-striped dress. "I like colorful clothes," Mojaddidi says.

She's married to a Pakistani immigrant, and has the advantage of speaking five languages including Pashto, Urdu, Farsi, English and French.

The case went to the jury April 13.

The case in Lodi is but one of many terror trials, launched by the U.S. Justice in the wake of the 9/11/2001 attacks, which have put the prosecutors and the FBI in an exceptionally poor light. Here in CounterPunch we recently described at some length the farcical imbroglios that followed the Bureau's misidentification of a fingerprint taken from a bombing scene in Madrid and the efforts to put an innocent Portland lawyer in prison for a lengthy term. Eventually the case was thrown out after the Spanish police managed to make it clear that the print had absolutely to do with any finger on either of Brandon Mayfield's hands. It turned out that the bombers in Madrid had nothing to with Al Qaeda.

In a Detroit case involving the prosecution and convictions of three Muslims – a supposed terrorist "sleeper cell" — in 2003, the sequel has been the release of the convicted men . A grand jury has now issued an indictment of Richard Convertino, the lead prosecutor from the DoJ, along with Harry Raymond Smith, a security official from the US embassy in Amman. They are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice by making false statements.

In Florida the widely publicized Sami al-Arian case ended with his acquittal on all the most serious charges. In the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui in Virginia the prosecution were seconds from losing its case amid charges of witness tampering before the demented Frenchman made his bid for glory by alleging his target was the White House and his proclaimed accomplice Richard Reid, the man now serving a life term for boarding a plane with explosive in his shoes. CP

Regarding the Lodi case, this piece has relied on the excellent reports in the San Francisco Chronicle (*primarily by Demian Bulwa) and by reporters at the* Sacramento Bee.

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